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The Status of the Career Teacher: Its Effect upon the Teacher Dropout Problem.

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As the education of pupils may be better in a school staffed with permanent career teachers rather than with itinerant teachers, every attempt should be made to increase the status of teaching and consequently the likelihood of attracting and retaining better teachers. Several steps could be taken to raise teaching to the level of other professions: reduce the number of teachers (as in differentiated staff), raise the levels of training and competence (which should be demonstrated) required to enter and advance in the profession, increase salaries, develop a hierarchy of teaching positions (as in college), and provide working conditions in which the teacher has control over his practice and has time to plan lessons and continue inservice training. Yet there is not adequate reliable information about teacher dropouts. Certain generalizations are known about professional differences for men and women, between the United States and foreign countries, and among elementary, secondary, and college levels; but a longitudinal study of at least 20 years is needed to follow the progress of those who begin teaching. (LP)

Research and Development Memorandum No. 47

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STANFORD CENTER
FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
IN TEACHING

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CONTENTS

THE STATUS OF THE CAREER TEACHER: ITS EFFECT UPON THE TEACHER DROPOUT PROBLEM[1]

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This paper analyzes the status of the career teacher as it bears upon the teacher dropout problem. It begins with the assumption that the education of pupils will be better in a school characterized by a permanent cadre of career teachers than in one staffed by a troupe of itinerants. If this be true, then every attempt should be made to improve the status of the career teacher and thereby increase the likelihood of attracting and retaining better persons for teaching. The logic of this position is difficult to contradict, but the path that leads toward the achievement of high status for career teachers is a stony, tangled one.

A few years ago the writer observed that if we wished to solve the pupil dropout problem, we had better solve the teacher dropout problem first.[2] During the next two years the news service of Stanford University received an unprecedented number of clippings from the newspapers across this country repeating this statement. This fact underscores the serious and widespread nature of the teacher dropout problem. Many factors bear upon the problem; this paper examines one of the most important, namely the influence of the status of the career teacher.

The question of the teaching career's power to hold those who enter it is more serious than might appear at first glance. Not only do many teachers leave soon after beginning to teach; it is als' 'leged that often the best ones drop out

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[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at a symposium on the teacher dropout sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa and held in Austin, Texas, November 1968.

[2] Robert N. Bush. The formative years. In The real world of the beginning teacher. Washington, D.C.: National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards, National Education Association, 1966. Pp. 1-14.

most rapidly, leaving a disproportionate number of the less able to fill the ranks of those who become career teachers. This is a serious charge, and since it has not been fully validated it ought to be placed high on the list of projected research endeavors.

The central question to be investigated is: Does the status of the career teacher encourage, discourage, or have little effect upon the decision of teachers to drop out and enter other careers? If the answer is that it encourages teachers to leave, then the second consideration becomes: What changes are needed to improve the status of the career teacher?

The paucity of definitive studies on the career teacher requires heavy reliance upon one's own personal experience as a career teacher. Much better data than are now available are needed for embarking upon an effective program to remedy the faults which now permeate the system. Before proceeding to the assertions around which the discussion is organized, definitions of terms may be helpful.

Teacher refers to those who occupy positions in the elementary, secondary, and collegiate schools, who work with students in classrooms, and who are legally and professionally entitled to hold the ranks to which they are assigned.

A career teacher refers to one who has undergone special training and who undertakes his work as a permanent calling. A career refers to an occupation or profession engaged in as a lifework in contrast with something undertaken only for a short term. One dictionary definition of career lists, in addition to the foregoing, a statement to the effect that it represents a course marked by continued progress, or consecutive progressive achievement. This is an important point, for, as we shall see later, the lack of continued progress constitutes one chief difficulty in establishing teaching as a professional career.

Status will be used to denote the position or rank of teaching in relationship to other professions or careers, to other positions within the educational professions, and to subgroups within teaching itself. Stated another way, status refers to the relative rank of career teachers in a hierarchy of prestige.

To sum up, this discussion is directed toward the study of the relative rank in a hierarchy of prestige of the teacher who enters and continues upon his or her career for a lifetime, and the influence of this relative rank upon those who are considering and decide to enter teaching.

How important is career status in holding those in who enter upon teaching? What determines low or high status, and what are some of the chief factors bearing upon change in status? We assume that high status in a career causes it to have greater holding power than if it had lower status, and also that high status is good for the profession, provided, of course, that high status holds the right people. The nagging suspicion that the status of the career teacher is not high enough and that this condition has a deleterious effect upon the profession's holding power leads ultimately to concern with the question of how career status may be changed.

Factors Affecting the Status of a Career

Several main factors seem to determine the status of a career:

1. Numbers in the career. Other things being equal, professions with fewer numbers probably tend to have higher status than those with many. Teaching, considered one of the "learned professions," is by far the largest. It has been referred to as making up the "masses" of the professions. Those engaged in teaching in the United Stated number over two million. None of the other professions approaches this number. One recommendation often advocated for improving the teaching profession is to cut sharply the total number of persons who are admitted to teaching. As noted later, the career status of college teachers is much higher than that at other levels. Their numbers have been kept low principally through the requirement of a Ph.D. degree. It has been argued that teacher education has mistakenly followed a pathway of preparing many teachers simply because it was assumed that the country needed a large number of teachers. Unlike medicine and law, if more teachers have seemed to be needed, the reaction has often been to reduce the standard and admit as many as were presumably needed. In medicine and law, the standard of training remains high. If the numbers are not sufficient to care for all clients who need treatment, either some go without treatment, or the available talent is spread over more clients.

One likely reason for the lower status of teaching, as compared with other professional groups, is thus sheer numbers. Without some significant change in numbers, no markedly upward shift in the status of teaching may be anticipated. One solution currently advanced is the proposal for a more highly differentiated staff, with fewer fully qualified teachers who would head teams and a larger group of other personnel below the teaching rank. In this arrangement, the total number of teachers would be sharply reduced, while the total number of personnel in schools would be sharply increased. The net result would, it is argued, advance the status of the career teacher.

2. Importance of the occupation. How fundamental to the welfare of society is the occupation considered to be? This is one important factor affecting the general status of a career. For ages, in many cultures the medical profession has stood at the peak of career status. One important reason is the crucial nature of the medical practitioner's work in the lives of people. Indeed, life itself often depends upon the practice of skilled physicians. Teaching too has long occupied an honorable, though less important, place. In recent times it is coming to occupy an even higher position. With recent shifts to more nonmaterial values, particularly among the younger generation, the importance of a calling primarily designed to help other people, as education is, promises much for the future. In the past, family power and prestige were powerful determinants of a person's place in society. Today, an individual is irreparably handicapped without the personal or vocational competence that results from an adequate education. Thus the importance of a teaching career has still another cubit added to its stature.

3. Financial remuneration. Compensation has ever loomed high on the list of factors influencing the status of an occupation. In this regard, teaching has long ranked low, certainly in comparison with the other "learned professions." As teachers in recent times have become better organized and more militant, they have improved their absolute as well as their comparative position. But they have not really gained much against the inflationary spiral, and they still remain relatively low in the salary hierarchy. Considering the level of training required for initial entry into the occupation, teachers have had a difficult time

keeping up with those who enter business and engineering. Nonetheless, with more aggressive unionization, now rapidly developing, and with the taxing power of the federal government thrown into the balance, the economic future looks brighter. If this be true, a positive effect on the status of the career teacher may be anticipated. Furthermore, a sharp reduction in the number of persons who are designated as teachers at the top of a differentiated hierarchy, with a salary based more on increased levels of responsibility, competence, and training, should open new avenues for progress in career teaching.

4. Degree of expertise displayed by the practitioner. This is one of the two most fundamental factors affecting the status of one who follows a career in any occupation. It is the possession of an expertise that most distinguishes a professional from a nonprofessional. In this regard, the career teacher is on the escalator, but not very high. The university teacher now stands highest in the degree of training and skill he exhibits, although his strength is on the subject matter rather than the pedagogical side. Indeed, one hears the allegation that some elementary and high school teachers have greater pedagogical skill as a result of their specialized training. This advantage, however, does not offset the influence on status which results from the much higher degree of skill in subject matter exhibited by university teachers. At the moment, the typical requirement for teaching in elementary and secondary schools in this country rests at the bachelor's degree level, which places it no higher than the minimum level for entrance into business, engineering, and a number of the other professions and well below that for law, medicine, and theology. As the degree of training required for teaching moves up through the master's degree and beyond, and as this training becomes increasingly relevant to the task of teaching, we may expect the status of the career teacher to improve. Furthermore, if the career teacher, in comparison with the beginner, is required to have a much higher level of skill, as judged both by the amount and character of training as well as by performance, marked improvement in his status may be anticipated. To some extent the rationale for current salary scales rests upon an assumption that a higher degree of skill results from additional training and

advanced degrees. Unfortunately, these scales do not also require a judgment of demonstrated skill to accompany added training. As matters now stand, advances on the salary scale result primarily from becoming one year older - a condition which detracts from rather than enhances the status of a career teacher. Until a higher degree of training and skill, particularly demonstrated skill, are made a part of acceptance to career standing, we may not expect great improvement in the status of the career.

5. Conditions of work. Along with the expertise just discussed, the other factor of greatest importance in determining the status of the career teacher relates to the conditions of his work. To what extent does he have freedom over his own movement and control over the practice of his profession? Is he autonomous? Are the physical surroundings in which he works attractive and comfortable? Is his load reasonable? Are his daily and weekly hours of work and his vacation periods favorable? On this latter point, a different perception between those in the profession and the general public may be noted. The public perceives teachers as enjoying long weekends and annual three-month vacations. While this state of affairs prevails for some teachers, forgotten is the extent to which teachers, because of low salary, must work during the summer months when they are not with students, or go to school at their own expense to update their training. One recommendation now receiving serious consideration is to place teachers on a twelve-month contract, with one month of paid vacation, as is the case with many other professionals. The added time on the payroll can then be used not mainly for work with youngsters but for inservice training, planning and revising courses, developing materials, and engaging in other kinds of work necessary for effective teaching. The teacher at the elementary and secondary school levels is unfortunately locked into a very tight schedule. This is less true at the higher-education level, where his status is correspondingly higher. As new school buildings are constructed in which teachers have private offices and work centers where they can work by themselves and with small groups of their colleagues, as they have technical aids to assist them with their work, as they begin to work in more open schools where their time is not so fully scheduled with pupils, and as they have more time to use at their own discretion to plan their work and to advance their

own training, the status of the career teacher may be expected to take a sharp upward swing.

6. Tradition. The influence of tradition upon the status of the career teacher is the last factor to be discussed. This powerful force operates to depress the rate of change. Given the current relatively low status of teaching among the professional occupations, no marked change may be anticipated within a short period of time.

In the long run, then, there are grounds for suspecting that the status of the career teacher is a fundamental factor in attracting persons to education and in keeping them at work in the field. It may be concluded, therefore, that this status is a general, pervasive, powerful, and evaluative force and that whatever can be done genuinely to improve the status of the career teacher will make a lasting contribution toward improving the holding power of the occupation. Some of the factors just delineated are more important than others, some are more derivative. All, however, are interrelated and need to be considered in any analysis of status problems and any attempt to improve that status. One root problem is that the prestige of career teachers is not sufficiently different from that of noncareer teachers, that is, those who enter and teach for a short time or who drop in and out. Under these circumstances, why should one persist in the career? If by persisting one does not achieve a position which is much loftier than if he fails to persist, why not shop around? Teaching at the higher-education level has a better mark in this regard, as noted below. The prestige of the full professor, achieved only after a lengthy period, is much higher than that of the beginning instructor. Here there is a clear pattern for promotion and progress.

Public and Professional Perceptions of the Teacher's Career Status

In considering the status of the career teacher, we may note some differences between the view held by society generally and the more specialized view held by those within the profession itself. Some brief mention of these differences has

already been made in discussing autonomy and vacations. Both sets of perceptions operate on those newcomers who are at the pivotal point of deciding whether to stay or to leave. The view of society is probably the more pervasive. It has also probably been more influential in luring individuals to enter the profession in the first place. Once a person has decided that he wants to be or thinks he wants to be a teacher, he applies, and, if he is admitted, he receives the initial training.

At this point, what happens is crucial. I have labeled this period covering initial training and the first few years of teaching, "the formative years." Here the beginner obtains a fundamental impression of his future career which is probably of lasting significance and of crucial importance in determining whether or not he will persist. At this point, the difference between the career teacher and the noncareer teacher is probably not as great in the public conception as it is in the profession. A view expressed throughout this paper is that the structure of teaching is so flat, particularly at the elementary and secondary school levels, and the differences between the career and the noncareer teacher so limited, that they serve to depress the holding power of the profession.

Furthermore, one of the most serious problems affecting the new teacher in his formulation of a desire and commitment to remain in teaching is the manner and content by which he is socialized by his older colleagues. At first hand, day after day, he works alongside those who have been teaching for five, ten, fifteen, or twenty years. He listens to what they say. He notes the tenor of their laments, the intonation of their voices, and their expressions of satisfaction, joy, and frustration. To the extent that he finds his older colleagues satisfied, living productive lives, continuing to keep alert, growing in their profession, and exuding a degree of satisfaction or even enthusiasm, he is likely to want to aspire to the status which they have achieved and to continue in his career. If he finds them tired, overworked, underpaid, with low morale, and complaining about lack of satisfaction, he is likely to be driven out. At this point, of course, it is difficult for him to make comparisons with persons who are in other fields of work, and there is always the tendency for the pasture to look

greener on the other side of the fence. To put it briefly, if he finds conditions repulsive, he will tend to leave; if he finds them attractive, he will tend to stay.

Five Observations

Let us now turn to several propositions about our problem which seem warranted and relevant.

Inadequate Information

Proposition 1. We know far too little about who stays in and becomes a career teacher as contrasted with those who drop out. Our first and most formidable barrier to reform is ignorance - a fact which underlines the importance of the research recommendations presented here. We could discuss this whole topic with a much greater degree of authority were we clear on the essential facts. As one reads the educational literature, it abounds with assertion but contains little evidence. We do know that there is a large loss of those who enter teaching. We know also that there is a large amount of wandering in and out. And we have some scattered evidence that those who wander in and out or who drop out do so less from dissatisfaction with the processes of teaching than from the pressures of other forces. Beyond this, we move on rather slender evidence. There is a great need, therefore, for research, for more precise and comprehensive information about the problem.

Consider for a moment teaching at the elementary and secondary levels. There has been some speculation, which appears on the surface to be logical, that those who stay in teaching are probably those for whom the achievement of a position in teaching satisfies their upwardly mobile drive in the social structure. If they have climbed as high as they ever aspired, they are satisfied. Couple this with the fact that such teachers may like the work which they are doing and the particular situation in which they find themselves, and one finds a strong combination of forces which would cause people to stay in the profession. Accordingly, one would expect a reasonably high degree of morale among them. This would be a useful hypothesis to test. Another and related line of argument runs that

teaching retains those who have not the strength of drive to want to continually improve their status, who are not aggressively upwardly mobile, and who are in other ways more docile and less aggressive. This, it is said, to some extent explains the larger number of females who enter and persist in elementary education, since females are not so driven by the occupational competitive drive as males. This set of ideas is testable by research.

Perhaps the opposite set of forces operate at the college and university level. Those who persist may be those who have the drive and competence to achieve the level of education represented by the doctorate and who strongly aspire to become scholars. In contrast with the elementary and secondary levels, where the route of progression is away from teaching into administration and supervision, there is a more acceptable route to higher scholarly honors and position, so that the college level teacher is not driven out of the teaching profession in order to progress in his career.

It is probably true that each additional year an individual spends in the teaching career makes it more likely that he will continue another year. His salary goes up, he puts more money into and is entitled to greater retirement benefits, he receives more of the informal perquisites which flow to the older members of the teaching staff, such as preferences in the kinds of pupils he teaches, the desirability of the rooms to which he is assigned, the convenience of the schedule which is arranged for him. The important question which arises and which needs answer at this point is: Are we, with the present systems of rewards and punishments in the formative years of teaching, encouraging those who should be encouraged to remain and discouraging those who should be discouraged?

Differences Between Elementary, Secondary, and Tertiary Levels

Proposition 2. Perhaps the most far-reaching generalization about the status of the career teacher is that it is markedly different at the elementary, secondary, and college levels. Significant differences may be noted between the elementary and secondary levels, although these are diminishing. But a giant chasm separates

the elementary and secondary school teachers from those at the college and the university levels, and this fact is of utmost importance as we consider needed reformation.

The structure of teaching in elementary and secondary schools is relatively flat. There is no substantial route of progress within the teaching structure itself. If one is to advance, he takes additional training to qualify for an administrative, counseling, or supervisory credential and moves out of the classroom. This is how to enhance prestige, salary, autonomy, and freedom. While we are beginning to complain about this state of affairs, as yet we still do very little to change it. Furthermore, the status of the elementary or the secondary school teacher does not change much from the first years to the last years. There is some shift as he moves from the nontenured to the tenured status, and there are some internal and informal differences with subtle shadings in the hierarchy. But for the most part, the teacher of 30 years occupies no higher status than the teacher of five years - and indeed sometimes less.

This flat structure tends to be undifferentiated. Individuals move automatically up the salary schedule, step by step each year. There is some credit for additional training, but the major advances are made by the passage of each year. Each year the teacher stays he tends to remain longer, as his investment in retirement increases and he attains a higher level on the salary scale. He could not match these advantages by transferring to another school where only limited credit is given for previous experience. As he stays longer, given his lack of training and experience in other occupations, he finds it difficult to find a comparable position. Therefore, it is alleged that some of the more dissatisfied, aggressive, and alert young people, seeing that their condition will not be markedly different after 10, 15, or 20 years, tend to get out early and start on another career line.

Note how sharply this set of conditions differs from that in the college or university. Here the structure is highly differentiated and vertically organized. To begin with, the level of training required for entry is much higher. The teacher begins as an instructor. But the career teacher in the university is a full professor.

His status in the culture, always high, is becoming higher and more powerful all of the time. But note that he does not achieve this status at the outset. During the course of working for his Ph.D. degree, he typically begins his work at the lowest rung of the ladder as a teaching or laboratory assistant. After he obtains his initial teaching certificate, the Ph.D. degree, he enters at the low end of the scale as an instructor or assistant professor. Gradually, over a decade or more, after clearing hurdles established by his colleagues and being judged by them, he moves from assistant professor to associate professor and eventually to full professor. His salary is accordingly raised; although there are instances where, money lacking, he may be given only an increase in rank, ironically referred to as a "dry raise." This rise in rank is usually more important to him than an increase in salary. The important idea to be noted here is that if he is competent, improves his effectiveness, and clears increasingly rigorous hurdles, he is able to progress to increasingly higher status which is generally recognized both inside and outside the teaching ranks.

There is little question that the status of the career teacher in the university is much higher than that of the elementary and secondary school teacher; the principal reason lies in this markedly different design of the system. The evidence strongly supports Corey's assertion that we should probably abandon the equality theory and the undifferentiated concept of the teaching staff that exists in the schools and move toward a vertically organized profession in elementary and secondary education with differentiated roles, which corresponds more with the higher education model. This model is not without its difficulties. A notable and widely recognized one is that the career teacher in the university is often more interested in research than in teaching and that the routes of promotion and rewards depend more upon research than upon teaching competence. Nonetheless, the general superiority of the university's holding power suggests that we might seriously consider a shift at the elementary and secondary school levels toward the higher education model.

Differences for Men and Women

Proposition 3. A third generalization, influential and fairly well documented, is that the career status of teachers operates differentially for men and women. As matters now stand, the career status of teaching tends to drive more men than women out of the profession. If a woman is still teaching in the classroom at the age of 50, no one raises questions. For a man who at 50 still teaches the third grade, there are those who wonder what is wrong. Why did he not advance into some kind of "higher" position? While the stereotype of becoming an old maid may still remain as a mild deterrent to a young woman entering teaching, it is becoming less and less prominent. It is considered all right to be an old maid school teacher or even an old female married teacher, the more likely case. The rising militancy of teachers has been attributed in part to the fact that more and more men are coming into and staying in teaching and that for the young male teaching is his principal occupation as head of the family. It is not a second and less important occupation in the family as it has prominently been for many women. It is difficult to tell whether this phenomenon of more young men persisting in teaching acts more as cause or effect on the upward swing in the status of career teaching. Perhaps it operates as both. The fact remains that men still have a stronger position in the labor market generally than do women. While this situation may be shifting, it still prevails. As women enter the labor market, the idea lingers that their first career is that of homemaker. For men, a career in the labor market, as the principal breadwinner of the family, persists.

When we examine the differences between the levels of education, we see that in the United States elementary school teaching is still perceived as a career for women, and that as such, it has lower status than teaching in high school or college. If the status of elementary teaching is to improve, either the concept of women's place in the labor market must change, or the career line in elementary education must be formulated in such a way that it will also be seen more as a male occupation. The situation at the high school level is more evenly balanced. Teaching in high schools seems almost to be an equally acceptable career status for men or women, although there is still some tendency, as noted above, for the older male high school teacher to be questioned if he has not gone into administration. At the

college level, the teaching career still remains largely a man's job. Partly for the reason that it is a male occupation and partly for other reasons outlined above. College teaching has a much higher status than career teaching in elementary and secondary schools.

Differences between the United States and Foreign Countries

Proposition 4. A fourth set of conclusions cluster around some of the interesting differences in the career status of teaching between the United States and other countries. Research data here too are meager, but impressions from the literature as well as a fair amount of direct experience in schools in other parts of the world suggest that the career teaching status in the elementary schools is higher in the United States than it is in many, if not most, other parts of the world. The higher level of training required for elementary school teaching; the fact that such training is often offered in a university, not solely in normal schools or other specialized and less prestigeful institutions; and the single salary schedule all may contribute to this higher status. At the high school level, the career status is very similar to that in other parts of the world. There are, however, some specialized types of schools, such as the grammer school and the great public school in England, the lycée in France, or the gymnasium in Germany, in which the status of the teacher is higher than that of the high school teacher in the United States. At the college and university level, the career position of professor probably ranks higher in other countries, and particularly in Europe. It is difficult to generalize about Latin America, where the university professor has a high prestige but his occupation is only part time. One reason for the higher position abroad may be the fact that there are fewer full professors and that these tend to be administrators. Furthermore, and here we are on less certain ground, there is a reputed higher respect for intellectual and academic matters in European life.

On the whole, the status of a career in teaching is more firmly established at higher grade levels in the foreign context, particularly in Europe, than it is in America. A tradition of the schoolmaster, both in public and private schools, is strong at all levels. Note the fact that the doctorate, which is predominately a research degree, is not required for college and university teaching in Europe.

There, the master's degree has been much more of a teaching degree. The fact that many teachers at the higher educational level follow lifelong careers without obtaining the doctorate underscores the conclusion that the tradition of the career teacher is more established, and that the career has perhaps a higher status than in the United States.

Steady but Not Spectacular Improvements

Proposition 5. The fifth, and final, generalization about the status of the career teacher is that in spite of difficult, often discouraging problems, the long view supports the likelihood of continued steady improvement. Seen as evolving from Grecian times, when slavery characterized the teaching status, until the present, when the career teacher occupies a full professorial chair, the distance traveled falls into perspective. While it remains as true as in Dickens' day that "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times...," we now begin to hope that teachers can be free and that while teaching has been a poor but honorable calling, it may yet become a rich and honorable one. Furthermore, the value structure of society is changing, particularly in the United States. Occupations in which "people help people" are rising in status. This trend is strengthened by the technological revolution, which is taking the onerous physical labor of producing goods off the backs of men and has helped give them time to contemplate non-material pursuits.

Teaching now has become the largest single calling for all college graduates. More and more competent persons from all strata of society express interest in teaching. Larger numbers of National Merit Scholars wish to enter teaching. Over the past few decades, elementary and high school teachers have been freer to participate in all aspects of community life without infringement upon their personal behavior. Increasingly, teachers are protected so that they may pursue their teaching in an academically free atmosphere. Furthermore, the average length of time for which a teacher has held his position has increased for each of the past three decades. There is no reason to believe that this trend will not prevail in the future. All signs point to a growing maturity and a growing holding power in the teaching profession and to a rising status for the career teacher.

On the gloomy side, we rail against undue restrictive credential requirements, bad teacher training, and poor teaching conditions. These, we allege, drive the best minds out of teaching. Are these conditions being remedied? It must be remembered that as teaching has become more attractive, and as increasing numbers wish to enter the field, no small number of the complaints about the entering hurdles come from those who simply want, with a bachelor's degree or less, and no attention to pedagogical matters, to have an easy entry to the profession. This should not drive us to defend indefensible hurdles and ineffective training, but neither should we be driven to permit anyone who wants to teach to jump in whenever he wishes with the anticipation that he can informally pick up his professional competence along the way.

Suggestions for Research

The foregoing analysis reveals how meager a research base we have on which to develop reforms to improve the status of the career teacher. Very little is known about the career teacher until he is so far down the road that it is difficult to reconstruct the circumstances which went into his choice and becomes almost impossible, for research purposes to match him with those who entered but did not stay. There is therefore a great need for a longitudinal study, 20 or more years in duration, in which a defensible sample of those who begin upon careers of teaching can be followed long and intimately enough to determine what really happens to them. We know of no such studies. Many intriguing and important studies could be carried out within such an investigation. For example, do those with the strongest initial commitments stay? Were those with the strongest initial commitment subsequently the most competent? Were they able to contribute most to the profession? We do not as yet have a good means for assessing strength of commitment. Here is a good research and development problem. No doubt with some attention quite reliable and valid measures of strength of commitment to teaching could be developed. Even as we embark on a 20-or-more-year longitudinal study, a retrospective study should be made. A sample could be obtained of those who entered teaching and persisted and those who entered teaching and left early. Although it could not be meticulously scientific, through carefully structured

interviews with the sample and those who knew them well over a period of time, useful findings should result.

With so much apparent difference between elementary, secondary, and college levels, we ought perhaps to embark upon studies intended to delineate in more precise detail the reasons for such differences. Perhaps out of these more definitive studies we might learn more about the subtle factors of career teacher status that influence the decision to stay in or to leave teaching.

Conclusion and Summary

What needs to be done to improve the status of the career teacher? By way of recapitulation and summary, the following positive actions are suggested.

1. Reduce the total number of teachers.

2. Abandon the equality theory. Move toward a more differentiated staff, in which there is a high level of position toward which young persons can aspire and toward which they can, if they are competent, make steady progress. One should not be able to start at the top.

3. Markedly increase the level of competence and training required for entrance into teaching. This would mean the preparation of genuine experts, and probably implies a reduction in numbers. It would require strict adherence to meaningful hurdles. Only those who meet them would be fully "licensed" teachers.

4. Provide school conditions in which teachers may exercise their expertness. This recommendation, with the foregoing one, constitutes the heart of any comprehensive and significant program for improving the status of the career teacher.

5. Develop a distinctive teaching degree, comparable to the M.D. and the L.L.B. in length, relevance, and rigor. Unfortunately, the Ph.D. degree is essentially a research degree. Unless it is substantially changed, it can never serve as a teaching degree; and it is remarkably resistant to reform. The master's degree is not adequate. The reform in medical education which took place early in this century came about through reforming the training program

and the requirements for an acceptable M.D. degree. We badly need, therefore, a distinctive teaching degree in America. Such a degree should be required for the fully qualified career teacher at all levels - elementary, secondary, and tertiary. The adoption of this one recommendation would go far toward solving some of the root problems facing schools today.

6. Reform our conception and design of teacher education so that it would become longer, more relevant, and more rigorous. The design of such a program of training, extending over a period of six to eight years and including an extended internship and externship, has been outlined in the publication cited earlier.

I hope that we may undertake some research studies along lines developed and recommended here. Surely future action will be better with a solider basis on which to proceed. I suspect, however, that action is the greater need and that we already know much of the kind of direct action which is required.

If we are able to effect a change in the status of the career teacher, that change may be more symptomatic than causal. Desirable change in the status of the career teacher will be the result of reforms from one end to the other of the professional spectrum. When the status of the career teacher changes for the better, the teacher dropout rate will have lowered. But it will happen only after far-reaching changes throughout the profession. Here, rather than in direct attempts to alter the status of the career teacher, lies the greatest promise.

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